

## 52 ifomvrc ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER

calling on the Deity to manifest himself in order that he may believe in him, asking the why and the wherefore of things, and displaying a grim consciousness of the wretchedness of mankind. There are lines in this poem of his twentieth year which suggest the Zola of the last stage:

" Helas! qtie tout est noir dans la valise  
lumaine !  
Les hommes en troupeaux se parquent dans la  
plaine,  
Vivant BUT des egouts, qu'entourent un mar  
croulant."

As his vacation drew to a close, Zola once more bestirred himself, and, after consultation with his friends, decided to make another attempt to secure the diploma which would prove an "open sesame" to regular employment. But he did not care to face the Paris examiners again; he preferred to try those of Marseilles, thinking, perhaps, that they might prove more indulgent. So, taking up his books to refresh his memory, he lingered in Provence till November.

At Marseilles, however, even his comparative success in Paris was denied him. He failed with his preliminary papers and was not even summoned for the *vivd-voce* examination. That defeat was decisive. When he returned to Paris he found his mother cast down by it; the friends who helped her had lost all faith in his

ability. It was useless for him to return to the Lycée. In another four months he would be twenty years of age; he must no longer remain a burden on others, it was time for him to earn his own living. But how was he to do so ? The outlook was gloomy indeed.